



MICHIGAN CHAPTER

March 12th, 2013

Senate Natural Resources, Environment and Great Lakes Committee
Michigan State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48933

Re: SB 229

Dear Committee members:

SB 229 would amend Part 19 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act to authorize the expenditure of Natural Resources Trust Fund (NRTF) interest and earnings on the dredging of harbors for use by recreational watercraft. Dredging is an excavation activity carried out in fresh water areas with the purpose of gathering up bottom sediments and disposing of them at a different location. This technique is used to keep waterways navigable and as a way to replenish sand on public beaches.

In Michigan, dredging is being discussed as a solution to the problem of exceedingly low water levels preventing recreational watercrafts from entering harbors. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the water levels of the great lakes have reached an all-time low this winter. **However, dredging is not a long-term solution.** It is only a temporary fix that would need to be repeated as high lake bed levels are a reoccurring problem, and signs point to extended periods of low water levels in the future. Also, dredging can stir up toxic sediments in the bottoms of lakes and rivers, mixing them into the water table. Any proposed dredging needs to be properly vetted under environmental review laws to assure that contaminants are not released into surface waters if the dredging is approved.

Michiganders voted overwhelmingly to put the Natural Resources Trust Fund into the Michigan Constitution in order to assure that the funds coming into the state as we depleted our non-renewable resources (oil and gas) would be available to provide for protecting lands permanently for future generations. While the provisions were modified slightly in two additional votes, **the investments were clearly envisioned by the voters as providing permanent natural resource and recreational facilities, not for funding the short term, limited benefit that dredging would provide.**

For these reasons, we urge a NO vote on SB 229. All votes on SB 229 will be included in the Sierra Club's Legislative Scorecard.

Sincerely,

Anne Woiwode
State Director
Sierra Club Michigan Chapter